



Date: February 7, 2023

To: Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee

From: Ben Shaiken, Director of Government Relations, The Alliance

Re: H.B. 5438 An Act Establishing a Debt-Free State College Program for Employees of Day Care Facilities, Home Health Care Agencies and Nursing Homes.

Good morning Representative Haddad, Senator Slap, Representative Haines, Senator Kelly and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

My name is Ben Shaiken, Director of Government Relations for the CT Community Nonprofit Alliance. The Alliance is the statewide organization representing the nonprofit sector. Community nonprofits provide essential services to over half a million individuals and families in Connecticut every year and employ 115,000 Connecticut workers, improving the quality of life in communities across the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 5438 An Act Establishing a Debt-Free State College Program for Employees of Day Care Facilities, Home Health Care Agencies and Nursing Homes.

The bill aims to create a program of debt-free state college for employees of day care facilities, home health care agencies and nursing homes. We appreciate the intent of the bill. Our testimony today is to request the bill be expanded to include all community nonprofits in Connecticut in addition to the types of organizations already covered by the bill.

Connecticut's nonprofits are facing a workforce crisis after three years of the COVID-19 pandemic. The nationwide exodus from the healthcare industry has been well-documented, but it has hit Connecticut's nonprofits acutely. Staff are leaving for higher paying jobs in private industry and private practice, where they can deliver behavioral health services remotely from their homes, and school districts are hiring clinical staff away from community-based nonprofit providers. The funding increases in the last state budget, while appreciated, has been completely enveloped by inflation. And unlike Amazon or Starbucks, nonprofits are paid for their services by the State and cannot unilaterally raise their prices to meet rising costs.

While the industries the proposed bill aims to cover are certainly experiencing similar pressures and are undoubtedly crucial to the wellbeing of Connecticut residents, so too are the nonprofits that provide the state's health and human services and the safety net.

If the Committee decides to draft the bill, we respectfully request the program be expanded to include Connecticut's community nonprofits.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.